Dear Sylvia (HR), 8/20/72

Begin without apprehensions, for I will neither chide nor recriminate. My purposes are exact;y the opposite, as will become clear. Otherwise I'd not be taking this time.

Oddly, when I had to speak to Lesar on May matters, on which I have been too deeply and involuntarily involved, Bob Smith ~~answered~~ andswered and referred to what impends as "the day of reckoning". I told him I hope it is something different.

Today's Morgan story may be only a beginning. Something like it was inevitable, as HR will tell you was clear to me from obfore the beginning. I have seen only the Post's rewrite of wire copy. (I had considered writing Ben Bradlee a personal letter, not for publication, but decided against it, feeling that the probabilities are that long-range interets are best served by events following the channel in which they not only are but always have been.)

It is what can follow against which I suggest you try to steel yourself. We don't know what will. I know what can, whether or not you have permitted yourself to. Among the possibilities is the personal and professional ruin of Cyril. It depends on official imaginativeness, not willingness or capability. This also is not new to me, as again HR can tell you. If I have not devoted myself to Cyril's salvation, I have done things toward that end, beginning before Lattimer saw the staff. Still again. Howard can tell you the fact, not the substance, for he was here on one occasion, including when I got advance knowledge of Lattimer.

There has not been a time in years when we could control events. All we could do was try to influence them. Under circumstances no others were willing to consider and were possible, this could have been enough. Those with the capability were selfish and had other motives in addition, and I know of none who didn't attribute this to me instead. It is not an uncommon working of the mind.

Much of what may now come may be influenced by the play or lack of play the Morgan story gets. Lattimer laid an egg. The Post story, if not as long as the wire copy, ~~xhx~~ has the potentially desired effect. On this we'll have to see. It says that there was an error in reporting the Commission didn't detect, but that despite it the conclusions are correct.

If I were running this Orwellian production, and I presume you are happy I am not, that to you, at least, I am not yet some kind of agent, what would follow would be a proper pontification by Fisher, with the fondest recollections of that brilliant but so strong-willed student who emerged a brilliant pathologist except when his emotions and preconceptions were involved, etc.etc.etc.And a thoughtful understand of how people can be driven to paranoid extreme by decent concern. No single harsh word but a total destruction.

The other immediate and future options should be obvious to you now, if they were not in the past. Can you imagine if Fisher were at the same time to present a few honest selections from Long John, as long ago I warned it was probable? Or if another does it, like, perhaps Bromley (don't underestimate him-I knew him in the 30s when he represented the pinkertons), speaks as a lawyer, leaving plenty of heavy artillery in reserve. Fisher and Morgan can afterward, for another example, have a joint press conference.

Two things only could have prevented some form of what we now face because officialdom had decided upon it and we were otherwise powerless to prevent it. One I proposed to Cyril about two years ago and he never responded. Were I to mention the other, as I have with emotion in the past and been misunderstood, I'd again be misunderstood. And one thing only could have diminished it or left us with a reserve besides me. I don't consider myself much of a reserve. That required unselfishness of which the self-seeking and selfish were incapable, so now we don't have that and I can't think of any way we can. Nichols is next. What can one expect? And if you'd like a sample of what can be done to and with that arrogance, I'll provide it.

So, my purpose is to alert you to the potential you appear not to have seen, for it you have a chance to thing about it you may be able to reduce its personal impact. There is now no reason for the heaping of either ashes or coals. Nothing can be gained by self- flagellation. Let us hope the occasion doesn't come, but if it does the last thing that can do any good is something like this. One of the next possible hazards is hastiness. Spilt milk is for cats. Yours is gone. So please have nothing to do with it. It can now do no good and there is every reason to try for it to do no harm. Sincerely,